



Learning Document

Integrated Humanitarian Support for Disaster Affected Populations in Pakistan (ECHO/PAK/BUD/2012/91001)

Action Facts

Integrated Humanitarian Support for Disaster affected Populations in Pakistan is an ECHO funded Action implemented by Alliance 2015 partner (ACTED, CESVI, Concern, PIN, and WHH) in the Sindh province of Pakistan. Since its inception in June 2012, the action is aiming to support 306,495 disaster affected individuals through provision of shelter and WASH related facilities. The Action has by the end of January 2013, supported 171,413 individuals.

Piloting shelter construction using commodity vouchers in Pakistan

Funded by ECHO, Concern (as member of Alliance 2015) piloted the construction of shelters using a voucher system through its local Partners, Research and Development Foundation (RDF) and Participatory Village Development Programme (PVDP), supporting vulnerable families who lost their homes in the 2011 floods.

At the community level, implementation of the project is overseen and facilitated by the Project Management Committee (PMC), which may be mixed or separate (men's/women's) depending on the local context.

Beneficiaries are selected by the community, through the PMC based on vulnerability criteria and subsequently verified by RDF and Concern. Orientation is delivered by Concern's Partners to communities on the voucher system and local markets are assessed, vendors oriented on the voucher process and agreements signed with the selected vendors.

"This is the first time we have ever been able to choose the materials ourselves. If we are not satisfied with the materials we can then return them so we are sure the homes we build will be strong and durable" Mohammad Ashraf, Judri Nawaz village, Mirpurkhas District, Sindh.



Champa, wife of Heero, Mir Khuda Bux village, plastering the walls of her shelter. Photo: Áine Fay, Concern. January 2013

Villagers are assisted with transport to the markets where beneficiaries have full control of selecting the materials for the completion of the shelter to the agreed standards. If the delivered material does not match the selected quality, the community member rejects the supply and payment is not made to the vendor until the quality agreed upon is delivered. Men and women are consulted on the design of the shelters and with technical support provided by both Concern and partner engineers, the communities are assisted with funds for labour to complete the structure of the shelter. Communities must provide some contribution themselves (e.g. mud, additional labour).

Successes:

- ✓ The voucher system gave beneficiaries a higher degree of choice and empowered them in the process of restoring their assets with dignity, while also increasing their sense of ownership. If dissatisfied with the quality, beneficiaries were empowered to request the material be replaced.
- ✓ In line with Concern's Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) commitments, beneficiary participation was ensured throughout the project processes. Leaflets in the local language (Sindi) were distributed to beneficiaries with detailed information about the shelter materials they were



entitled to, the addresses and contact numbers of vendors and information on how to share feedback, seek clarification or lodge complaints with Concern/Partners. A “help desk”, which also had a “Complaint Box”, was available during the voucher distribution and on market days, where Partner staff were available to offer guidance and assistance.

- ✓ Strengthened capacity of Partners to implement projects using the voucher modality in compliance with Concern and donor standards.



Photos: Left: Shelter used by Nazeeran, her husband and 2 children since the floods struck in 2011. Middle: Nazeeran preparing mud plaster for her shelter. Right: Nazeeran's new shelter provided by ECHO IV funds through Concern's Partner, RDF. Photos by: Áine Fay, Concern. January 2013.

Challenges:

- ✓ Building trust with vendors was initially challenging due to their about the voucher process. Through detailed orientation and mobilization, vendors became supportive of the process.
- ✓ Ensuring the active involvement of women in the project processes is a challenge due to deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms which hinder women's mobility and participation in society.
- ✓ Accessing the markets from very remote areas posed difficulties for beneficiaries, particularly for women, persons with disabilities and the elderly. To address this, transport arrangements were made to facilitate their travel to the markets.
- ✓ There were some delays in processing vendor payments due to delays in transferring funds, lengthy cheque processes and security-related issues, which resulted in vendors expressing dissatisfaction with the process. Security and corruption risk were mitigated against by conducting a risk analysis at the outset and having robust financial systems in place.

Lessons learned:

- ✓ The voucher modality is a flexible, fast and empowering strategy which engages affected persons in their own recovery in the aftermath of a disaster.
- ✓ Time investments are required at the outset to develop formats and monitoring tools and ensure quality design, after which the voucher system is an efficient and cost-effective approach, providing a high degree of choice to the beneficiaries and boosting local economies.
- ✓ Equal access of beneficiaries and transportation to the market is a key element for success.
- ✓ Working through local partners with existing contacts and relationships aided the timely delivery of the cash transfers.
- ✓ Finance and administrative staff must be thoroughly oriented on and included in the project planning. A strong and transparent relationship with suppliers and robust monitoring and financial systems are required to ensure the effective implementation of this approach.

Case Study

In Mir Khuda Bux Village of Mir Ghula Hussain Talpur UC, Sindh, Raman was divorced by her husband and now lives alone with her four children, all under 16 years. When the monsoon rains of 2011 hit, her home was completely destroyed and she was forced to flee leaving all her belongings behind. They stayed on the roadside for 3 months under a canvas shelter until the water receded.



Through her community Project Management Committee, Raman was selected for shelter support under Concern's ECHO funded project. She was supported to travel to the market and select the construction materials for her house. "Before this, I had never visited the market", Raman declared. "I was able to look at all the materials and select the ones I wanted" she explained. When the materials were delivered to her village by the vendor, and she checked that she was satisfied with the quality, Concern and its Partner organisation, Research and Development Foundation (RDF), provided technical

guidance on the construction of the house. Raman's family were involved in the construction of the house. Raman herself made the mud bricks and plastered the whole house, a time-consuming process which requires 2-3 layers with at least 2 weeks between each for drying purposes. Raman is delighted with her new home. "I am so happy with our new shelter...we will live comfortably here. This is the first time I have owned anything" Raman proudly declares.



Raman, the proud owner of her new home which she and her family constructed themselves. Mir Khund Bux Village, Mirpurkhas district, Sindh. Photo: Emily Bradley, Concern, February 2013